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Tax Charge Is Considered in Navy Spy Case

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WASHINGTON, July 12 — A Federal grand jury in San Francisco is trying to find out what happened to hundreds of thousands of dollars said to have been paid by the Soviet Union to a Navy spy ring, law-enforcement officials said today.

The jury is considering whether to indict Jerry A. Whitworth, one of four Navy men charged with espionage, on charges of tax evasion or tax fraud, the officials said.

Investigators from the Internal Revenue Service, the officials said, have turned up new information about the location of some of the money and believe that much of it could be in overseas bank accounts.

Two women who once worked with John A. Walker Jr., a retired Navy communications specialist accused of forming the spy ring, have been called to testify before the grand jury Tuesday, the officials said.

A lawyer for Laurie Robinson, one of the women, said the Federal Bureau of Investigation had told him she was a suspect in the spy case. In an interview, Mrs. Robinson said she had been questioned harshly by bureau agents.

'She's Done Nothing Wrong'

"Our position is that she's done nothing wrong," said the lawyer, John W. Drescher. "I know of no evidence that would involve her in any way in a conspiracy to commit espionage."

A source close to the investigation said that Mrs. Robinson failed a polygraph, or lie-detector, test when questioned about the case.

Mr. Drescher would not comment about the results of the test but he said: "The unreliability of the polygraph exam has caused every court of law in the country not to accept them as admissible as evidence. That is the position we will take."

Mrs. Robinson was a partner in Mr. Walker's detective agency, Confidential Reports Inc., and bought out Mr. Walker after his arrest in May.

Mr. Walker, his brother Arthur and his son, Michael, have been charged along with Mr. Whitworth in what officials have described as the most damaging spy case uncovered in the United States in 30 years. All four have served in the Navy. All pleaded not guilty.

The grand jury in San Francisco is working with a team of I.R.S. agents who are trying to determine whether Mr. Walker and Mr. Whitworth placed thousands of dollars in overseas bank accounts, possibly in Switzerland or in the Caribbean islands. Prosecutors have said that Mr. Whitworth received at least \$328,000 from the Soviet Union.

New Charges Are Expected

Louis A. Hiken, one of Mr. Whitworth's lawyers, said in a telephone interview that Mr. Whitworth was expected to be indicted on new charges by the end of this month. Mr. Hiken said he had learned of the timetable based on conversations with Federal prosecutors, who disclosed the tax investigation at a court hearing in June.

He would not describe the new accusations. But officials said that Mr. Whitworth, a retired Navy communications specialist, was facing indictment for tax evasion or tax fraud. They said the charges would stem from Mr.

Whitworth's purported failure to pay taxes on hundreds of thousands of dollars in payments from the Soviet Union.

The grand jury investigation is "focusing on two things," said a law-enforcement official. "We want to get whatever information is available about the money. We also want to know if any of the witnesses know anything else about Walker and Whitworth."

Mr. Whitworth is accused of passing secret information from Navy ships to Mr. Walker. Mr. Hiken said that Mr. Whitworth was not guilty of any of the charges.

Also scheduled to testify before the grand jury in San Francisco next Tuesday is P. K. Carroll, a former Norfolk police officer who dated Mr. Walker for nearly three years, said her lawyer, Jim McKenry.

Mr. McKenry said that his client had been told by the F.B.I. that she was not a suspect in the investigation. "I have been given previous assurances that she is not a target and not a suspect," Mr. McKenry said. "We have been given as clean a bill of health as the F.B.I. can give."

Federal officials said they had found no evidence that Mr. Whitworth's wife, Brenda Reis, a graduate student who now lives in Davis, Calif., had any involvement in the purported spy ring.

"We watched her for a while because we thought she might know where the money was," said one investigative source. "We found nothing."

In an interview, Miss Reis said that she had not been called before a grand jury in the case. "It all seems pretty quiet now," she said.